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ABSTRACT

Two papers discuss changes in college campuses and curricula due to the emergence of women's issues and the movement to resolve them. An essay by Paul Lauter, "The Campus," outlines some of the forces on campus making for change in college curriculum and feminist scholarship. These forces are categorized as "pushes" (women as consumers of education, existing programs providing special services for women, statistical studies of women's progress through education and into careers) and "pulls" (exciting developments and strong interest in feminist scholarship). Florence Howe's "The Curriculum" outlines the history of women's higher education in the United States and its effect on the development of curriculum in women's studies. It is noted that women's studies are necessarily interdisciplinary and share the critical elements of general education: in short, they prepare students to make informed, ethical judgments that allow them to participate in social, political, and cultural life. It is proposed that the strength of women's curriculum grows from the relationship it projects between past and future, thus supporting the true function and responsibility of the university. (MSE)

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THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: IMPACT ON THE CAMPUS AND CURRICULUM

Paul Lauter and Florence Howe

1978 National Conference Series, American Association for Higher Education

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THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: IMPACT ON THE CAMPUS AND CURRICULUM

Paul Lauter and Florence Howe

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I. THE CAMPUS

Paul Lauter

When women were less numerous and less vocal on college campuses than they are now, curricular change could be discussed without specific reference to their lives and their needs. Now that we are in a period of change in our classrooms—change symbolized, but hardly led by the new Harvard report on general education—we must seize the opportunity to go forward with women's lives and women's work clearly in view.

Census and NCES figures report that women account for 93 percent of the recent enrollment gains in colleges and universities. In 1965 about 39 percent of our undergraduates were women; in 1975, 45 percent; in 1976, 47 percent. This year, women account for over 48 percent of the nation's undergraduates; among students under 22 years of age, they constitute, for the first time, a majority of 52 percent. Graduate enrollments show even sharper gains—from 33 percent in 1965 to about 46 percent in 1977. Among those earning first professional degrees, only 3.7 percent were women in 1965; in 1977, the figure was still small but strikingly higher—21 percent. Projections of future overall enrollments suggest a leveling-off of the proportion of women at about 47 or 48 percent; but such projections have almost invariably underestimated the growth of female enrollments. In 1976, in fact, the number of women students increased by 7.2 percent, while the number of men students actually declined by 2.1 percent

Whether women become the numerical majority of U.S. college students may be less significant than the growing assertiveness among significant numbers of women students. The lawsuit brought by Yale student Pamela Price, charging that she received a C grade because she resisted her instructor's advances, however consequent in itself, is a symbol of and stimulant to that more militant mood. A recent issue of the University of Alabama's newspaper, *The Crimson White,* featured on its front page a full-color photograph of the newly crowned Miss University of Alabama, smiling in her traditional ball gown and crown. Inside the issue, however, three out of five letters to the editor expressed rather different concerns of women on the campus. One attacked a university agreement with the Jasons' organization which, the writer said, is discriminatory and in violation of Title IX. Another complained about inadequate information available to students on prenatal care and pregnancy, and the third, signed by eleven students, charged the newspaper itself with running sexist ads.

But the women's movement on campus has produced far more than attacks on sexist organizations, policies, and behavior. It has, in fact, developed a wide, though underfunded, network of programs and organizations that respond to women's needs, draw them together, and focus their activities. Most campuses now have a women's center with space to relax and hold meetings, and with information, libraries, and counselling for women students and staff. Some of these centers are funded by administrations out of student activity fees; others are funded directly by student associations. In a significant number of cases, women students have broken away from existing student governments to form their own organizations. Many campuses also have both housing designed for women students and child-care facilities—like women's centers, these often can become centers for organizing protest and programs. In addition, on more than 300 campuses —the figure may be much higher—a core of faculty plan and offer women's studies courses. These increasingly include special projects to support female science students, math anxiety clinics, and reentry programs for older women, as well as new cultural institutions like feminist theatre groups, bands, and choruses. Almost all of these organizational manifestations of the women's movement, and others like them, have come into being within the last ten years, and they are growing at an accelerating pace.

At the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, for example, the Women's Studies Committee formally supervises a set of courses, including one aptly titled "Surviving Female." In addition, the committee has established an "Awareness Resources Center"—the ARC—which provides women and concerned men with a comfortable, relaxed space to meet, talk, and plan, as well as offering various counselling and support services. The Committee organizes a variety of campus events, including a women's awareness week, and it has begun community programs as well. The integration of academic and extra-curricular, of campus and community concerns characterizes the activity of women on many campuses. At Old Westbury, for example, the Rape Crisis Center—another increasingly common feature—serves not only the campus, but the whole of populous

Nassau County. At the University of Minnesota, while the women's studies program, the women's center, and the continuing education programs are formally distinct, all three meet and plan jointly, thus allowing an integration of extension courses, counselling, and degree-granting academic work.

My point is not, however, to enumerate the varied manifestations of feminist activity on campuses, nor to praise the organic and imaginative character of women's programs—though such praise is certainly justified. It is, rather, to point out that this kind of organizational development, while it is a response to women's demands for services and opportunities, is *also* an impetus to further organization for change. It may well be that such organizations have been band-aid responses on the part of colleges to the more conscious or disaffected female students and staff. After all, the budget for the entire University of Minnesota program is less than $150,000—a pittance on a campus that size. Still, such organizational responses cannot contain, or fully respond to growing female awareness of wrongs—and rights. They whet the appetite for true equality—an appetite that must inevitably focus on the classroom and the curriculum, as well as on broader campus life.

Other forces push in the same direction. Title IX exempts curriculum and textbooks from its scrutiny. But in a context of mounting concern to carry out the broad principles of *affirmative* action, no one could establish a *cordon sanitaire* around the classroom. That lesson we learned from Vietnam: the realities of U.S. participation in that war forced upon students questions about their texts as well as about their government—just as it forced upon scholars questions about accepted interpretations of history. A student involved in a project to defend women against physical abuse and rape inevitably carries into the psychology classroom questions about old notions of personality norms, male aggressiveness and female passivity. A student discovering that Title IX mandates equal opportunities to enter professional programs wonders what the math department is doing to help her overcome long-conditioned math anxiety and thus actually qualify for such a program. A student observing, or participating in, International Women's Year or the campaign for ERA begins to look at her political science and history classrooms to inform her about women's previous struggles for equality before the law or for suffrage, about the usefulness of tactics like direct action and the boycott, about making and maintaining allies. In short, Title IX and other federal and state legislation establish as public policy that women have the right to an equal education. Public policy will have its impact on the curriculum.

One more factor: higher education in U.S. society is a commodity. It is purchased with earned or subsidized dollars, much like (and often together with) housing, food, musical recordings, automobiles, and the like. Buying one commodity often means you can't buy the other. In a consumer society, consumer consciousness and consumer protection develop grand proportions, especially when they are connected with efforts to protect our common heritage—the air, the water, the earth. In such a context, it is not surprising that students begin to use the courts, the legislature, and consumer forums to press upon educational institutions their demand for a supposedly better product. While some of this activity may finally be frivolous, it also reflects an ugly reality—that is, the efforts by many educational institutions to sell their programs with all the paraphernalia of Madison Avenue market research and huckstering.

What *is* surprising in this connection is that female students have not yet—so far as we know—approached the issue of curriculum as illegally cheated consumers. They well might do so. For example, Lucy Sells studied the relationship between training in mathematics and access to degree-granting programs at the University of California at Berkeley. In a fact sheet she summarized two of her major conclusions as follows:

(1) In a systematic random sample of freshmen admitted at Berkeley in the fall of 1972, 57 percent of the boys had taken four years of mathematics, including the trigonometry/solid geometry sequence, compared with 8 percent of the girls. The four-year mathematics sequence is required for admission to Mathematics 1A, which in turn is required for majoring in every field at the University *except* for the traditionally female, and hence lower-paying, fields of humanities, social sciences, library science, social welfare, and education.

(2) Among students earning the bachelor's degree in the 21 largest letters and science departments, there is a strong and statistically significant relationship between having a one-year college mathematics requirement in the curriculum, and having less than one-third of the degrees in the department earned by women.[2]

As consumers and as taypayers (or as daughters of taxpayers), women students might well argue that they are systematically and illegally being prevented from entering key fields of study as a *result* of their education in the State of California. They might further argue that the University itself has the obligation to provide them with the opportunities and support necessary for them to quality for entrance to such fields on an equal basis with men. The issue is not the validity of some such legal or legislative initiative, though that idea is hardly bizarre. The point, rather, is that in a consumerist climate, there will be increasing numbers of women prepared to challenge the product we offer them unless it merits the label of equal opportunity. This point is especially important because many colleges could not continue to survive financially but for the increase in female enrollments.

These issues are, one might say, "pushes" upon curriculum toward change. Perhaps more important are the exciting "pulls" of the new feminist scholarship. One vignette: at the 1977 Modern Language Association meeting in Chicago I attended a session on black women writers. The small room was exceedingly crowded and hot, yet the atmosphere was electric with discovery, involvement. The audience—mainly female, perhaps half black (extraordinary for the MLA) joined from every corner to share with others their knowledge and experience of a subject area little known to most MLA members and even to many in the room—the works of Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, and Toni Morrison, among others. Before the session was over, I had to leave to meet a foundation official; he was to be found in the Shakespeare section being held in the Grand Ballroom. In that cavernous hall perhaps 75 people were scattered, no two together, except for a small clutch near the door at the rear. There were about five women--not a black face. A speaker at the distant, raised rostrum was discussing medieval elements of Shakespeare's sources, while his colleagues on the dias yawned, searched the ceiling, fiddled with their own papers, counted the audience. The contrast—almost surreal—was instructive. The Shakespeare session had the quality of an empty ritual: the conference had to have a section on Shakespeare, whether or not anyone had anything much to say. And what was one to say, contemplating such picked-over grounds? It would have to be obscure and esoteric. I am reminded of the titles of the papers given in a recent symposium at SUNY/Binghamton, misleadingly called "On the Problems of Reading in Contemporary American Criticism." Those papers, every one by a male, carried titles like "Structuralism and Grammatology," "Formalism and the Duplicity of the Poetry of Presence: Identity Versus Difference," "Beyond Logocentricism: Trace and Voice Among the Quiché-Maya," and "The Art of Theology and the Theology of Art." The problem of reading—indeed, of criticism and of education—is amply illustrated by these titles, much as it was by that Shakespeare session.

The point is not to mock academic criticism. Rather, it is to underline by contrast the excitement of that session on black women writers—especially to underline the *educational* value of the scholarship and criticism such a session expresses. Feminist scholarship engages people—teachers and students both—not because professional scholars must present papers in order to get and retain jobs, but because it is addressed to understanding how things came to be the way they are, what we lost, forgot, or buried along the way that we want to know, and how we can go about changing things as they are. In literature, our own field, such concerns have led to the rediscovery and reevaluation of significant women writers such as Kate Chopin, Agnes Smedley, Zora Neale Hurston, and Edith Wharton. It is leading, inevitably, to a reevaluation of the accepted canon of, mainly, male and white authors, to an understanding that the canon does not fall upon us like the gentle rain from heaven, but is created out of social and cultural institutions. It shall very likely lead to a fresh look at the peculiar standards of taste that enshrine as culture heroes male bullies and female suicides.

In almost every area of the humanities and the social sciences, and in some of the sciences as well, feminist scholarship has been reinvigorating, often because it raises questions about long-cherished assumptions and patterns of organization of knowledge. Feminist historians, for example, have questioned the accuracy and usefulness of the standard period division of history—indeed, of the concept of periodicity.[3] Feminist psychologists have raised questions about the empirical basis of most generalizations on achievement motivation, to cite one instance.[4] Feminist art historians have destroyed the basis for the old saw "why are there no great women painters?" There are, and were.[5] The variety of academic and professional interests generated in the last ten years, primarily by the impact of the women's movement, is tremendous. The point is that scholars producing exciting intellectual work pull to them students and other teachers who are invigorated by their students.

Professional development has taken another form as well; that is, the organization of women's caucuses and commissions on the status of women in every professional association in academe. These groups propose and carry out studies; hold meetings of their own; sponsor publications, training workshops, and seminars; publish newsletters; and generally act as support groups for women who are developing professionally. The significance of these groups can perhaps better be understood in historical perspective. Feminist historians like Carroll Smith-Rosenberg have described the importance of female support networks to the lives and activities of nineteenth-century women.[6] In my own work, I have begun to understand the importance of female-defined cultural institutions like literary clubs and professional women's teas and dinners to the acceptance and proper valuation of women writers.[7] A major force in the almost total obliteration of women writers from the U.S. literary canon was the growing domination after 1920 of male-defined cultural institutions—from magazine boards to professional society groups and sections. In short, we can begin to see that in the past the existence of female-defined institutions supported women writers, scholars, and teachers. A similar phenomenon seems now to be well underway.

I have tried to describe a number of forces—pushes and pulls—that are in some degree making for change in college curricula and scholarship; change that, if carried out, would reshape college curricula in ways more responsive to the lives, histories, and needs of female students. But it would be foolish to suppose that such change will come easily, or that there are not powerful forces allied against it. The history of women's efforts to achieve meaningful education, or education at all—to which Florence Howe will turn next—does not encourage optimistic readings of the present or future. Nevertheless, this is a period of renewed curricular change, and the issue may be one of shaping direction.

One way of reading the present climate in academe is to recall that in educational history in this country periods of rapid expansion of opportunity have been followed by efforts to turn those expanded educational opportunities into a narrowed process of job training. The Open Admissions movement of the sixties—strongly rooted in the previous decade—succeeded in exacting from government and industry greater financial commitments to higher education. We witnessed an enormous expansion both of educational opportunity and of variety until about 1968—ten years ago, let us remember. Beginning at about the time of the first Nixon-Agnew administration, significant areas of government, big business, and foundations mounted an attack upon higher education in an often successful effort to restrict growth and to divert already committed resources to job training in business administration, law enforcement, computer technology, and the like. We need only recall the particularly gross example of Southern Illinois University, firing two score or more faculty in literature, history and the social sciences and hiring new faculty in, to quote their ad, "Correctional Services, Media Technology, Electronics Technology, Secretarial and Office Specialities, and Mortuary Science and Funeral Service."

The recent flurry of "general education" proposals can, in some degree, be seen as a reaction on the part of the traditional professoriat against the new vocationalism and its manifold abuses. In this respect, the concern for general education is a positive step, reasserting the position—honored rather in theory than in practice in American schools—that college has to do more with broad individual and social development than with job training. But in its particular manifestations, notably in the Harvard report currently being debated, general education proposals reflect the most elitist and backward-looking ideas of the established professoriat.

There are alternatives available, notably in the women's studies movement. If a significant number of educators concur in finding the Rosovsky report a difference without distinction, it might be well to examine the long struggle of half our students for meaningful education, in order to discover an alternative strategy.

FOOTNOTES

[1]See *Chronicle of Higher Education,* especially Sept. 19, 1977, p. 8; Oct. 3, 1977, p. 2; Jan. 9, 1978, pp. 1, 10; Jan. 16, 1978, p. 15.
[2]See John Ernst, *et. al., Mathematics and Sex,* 1976, available from Mathematics Department, University of California/Santa Barbara.
[3]See, especially, Bernice A. Carroll, ed., *Liberating Women's History* (Urbana, 1976); Joan Kelly-Gadol, "The Social Relations of the Sexes; Methodological Implications of Women's History," *Signs,* I (Summer, 1976), 809-823; Barbara Sicherman, "Review Essay: American History," *Signs,* I (Winter, 1975), 461-485.
[4]Useful summaries of recent literature in the field of psychology are provided in Mary Brown Parlee, "Review Essay: Psychology," *Signs,* I (Autumn, 1975), 119-138; Reesa M. Vaughter, "Review Essay: Psychology," *Signs,* II (Autumn, 1976), 120-146. A ground-breaking essay, still helpful is Naomi Weisstein, "Kinder, Kuche, Kirche as Scientific Law: Psychology Constructs the Female," in M. H. Garskof, ed., *Roles Women Play* (Belmont, Ca., 1971).
[5]See Lucy R. Lippard, *From the Center—Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York, 1976); Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Women in Sexist Society,* ed. V. Gornick and B. K. Moran (New York, 1971); Karen Petersen and J. J. Wilson, *Women Artists* (New York, 1976).
[6]Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs,* I (Autumn, 1975), 1-29.
[7]"Caste, Race and Gender in the Shaping of the American Literary Canon: A Case Study from the Twenties," unpublished ms. from Modern Language Association Forum: The Question of the Canon, Dec. 27, 1977.

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II. THE CURRICULUM*

Florence Howe

Among academe's few basic tenets, one rules supreme: It is easier to add on than to change. Whatever one is talking about—courses, departments, whole areas of study, whole institutions—it is easier to add something new or necessary than to change the worn or worn out, the untrue or the harmful. Though many examples might be offered, the major one pertinent here is the decade-long response to the contemporary women's movement. The overwhelming response has been the institutional add-on: the women's resource centers; the women's drop-in centers; continuing education programs for women; programs for reentry women; rape crisis centers. All are testimonies not to the fact that at least half the nation's undergraduates are women, but rather to the pressures of an independent women's movement on campuses never meant to serve women. The three hundred women's studies programs and the countless thousands of women's studies courses that have been added on to regular departmental offerings are additional cases in point: for the most part, the male-centered curriculum has continued unmoved, offering at best half-truths, based on ignorance or omission.

Women's studies has, over the past eight years, developed a rich alternative general education curriculum. As such, it serves mainly freshmen and sophomores, and it has vitalized areas of the humanities and social sciences long considered unsalvageable. In addition, women's studies has developed complex interdisciplinary majors responsive both to students who want professional or graduate training and to those who want jobs. Women's studies students are interested in history, literature, and philosophy, for example; and their interests are not the faddish ones of antiquarians, for whom particular periods may move in or out. Women's studies students are interested in history, literature, philosophy, and other curricular areas because they have real questions to ask about the significance of women's lives. They are not studying simply for the sake of the degree, but for the sake of knowledge and learning.

Still, I am interested not only in women's studies programs and course offerings, but also in the university that houses this new appendage. What is the university's response to this creation—the educational arm of the women's movement? I could describe several responses, beginning with laughter and benign neglect and concluding with hostility. In addition, of course, there have been from the first some few academic minds of both sexes stimulated enough by the prospect of the new scholarship on women to join the effort, as there have been academic administrators sensitive to the necessity for recruiting full-time enrollments to capacity, and willing therefore to give those women a chance. To understand the relationship between the women's studies program and the university that can at once house and ignore it, one must review the brief history of women's presence in the university.

HISTORY OF WOMEN'S HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE U.S.

The history of women's higher education in the U.S. is barely a century old. I want to begin 250 years before the 1870's, when the male university began its dual mission. The following promotional tract was written in 1643 to raise funds for the newly founded Harvard University, and it describes the process and the mission:

> After God had carried us safe to New England, and wee had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, rear'd convenient places for Gods worship, and setled the Civill Government: One of the next things we longed for, and looked after was to advance *Learning* and perpetuate it to Posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate Ministery to the Churches, when present Ministers shall lie in the Dust.[1]

Harvard was founded as a bulwark against ignorance and the loss of religious belief, and thus, as an instrument to educate ministers who would protect the values of the society. Those purposes —vocational training for males, and the protection of society's traditions, including patriarchy—have continued as the principal missions of higher education.

The center of the curriculum has always been the study of *man, his* relationship to God and the universe, to political and legal institutions, to the rich resources of this earth, and to the social

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forces unleashed by the complex civilizations *he* was pictured as creating and extending. A major question for the university in the late eighteenth century and again in the nineteenth was whether it should take responsibility for the education of those males who were not likely to become the ministers, lawyers, magistrates, and government officials of this nation, but rather its farmers and engineers. That question was far more important to the university than questions of women's education. So far as I know, the curriculum has never, in an organized way, focused on women.

Women entered higher education through a side door—if one is willing to admit that the seminary movement of the 1820's and 1830's is part of higher education's history. Its supporters were not "feminists" in the sense we use that term to describe the Stantons and Anthonys of the nineteenth century. They conceded that woman's physiology and brain were different and possibly weaker than man's, and they prescribed an education unlike the classical one offered to their brothers. There was one fundamental similarity, however: the education was also vocational. Women were to become school teachers—interestingly, in the words of Catherine Beecher, to function thereby as the "secular arm of the Church."[2] This movement represents the first phase of women's struggle for higher education, since the seminaries provided an elementary education to thousands of women who would otherwise have received none. Thus, they educated a first generation of women school teachers, who were conscious of their escape from ignorance and hence eager to teach others. In addition, these women formed part of the generation open to the call of the broader women's movement that followed later in the century.

The central idea of that broad women's movement of the nineteenth century was equality. Its premise was that if women were "equal" to men, they ought to be allowed equal rights not only to the ballot box, but to the university classroom, and even to the work for which such study qualified graduates. Especially after the Civil War, beginning in the seventies, women struggled for entrance into such state universities as Wisconsin and Michigan; and male educators continued a desultory quarrel among themselves about whether to open established institutions to women, as well as such new ones as Cornell.

When Charles Norton Eliot, the first chemist to be designated president of Harvard University, assumed office in 1869, he took the time, in a presidential address aimed mainly at establishing the sciences as legitimate areas of study within the context of a controversial "elective" system, to offer reasons why Harvard would not admit women students. Before quoting him, I will summarize the usual fears of males about the admission of women to higher education: (1) that there would be a "moral decline" among undergraduates; (2) that scholarship standards would be lowered; (3) that women's "delicate health" would be harmed; (4) that women's femininity would decline or disappear; and (5) that women's presence would prove "conducive to mating." Eliot was not concerned about women's health or femininity, but he was concerned about the strength (or weakness) of their moral character and intellect. His comments on women follow the section of his address in which he argues for the elective system by claiming the maturity of "The young man of nineteen or twenty" who "ought to know what he likes best and is most fit for." "If he feels no loves," Eliot adds, "he will at least have his hates." When Eliot turns to the "education and fit employments of women," he attributes their continued exclusion from Harvard college or its graduate schools to "The difficulties involved in a common residence of hundreds of young men and women of immature character and marriageable age. . . ." "The necessary police regulations," he added, "are exceedingly burdensome."

Eliot wanted it to be understood that this decision was not based only on suspicion of women's weak moral character. "The Corporation are not influenced to this decision," he says, "by any crude notions about the innate capacities of women," and continues: "The world knows next to nothing about the natural mental capacities of the female sex. Only after generations of civil freedom and social equality will it be possible to obtain the data necessary for an adequate discussion of woman's natural tendencies, tastes, and capabilities."[3]

Another example illustrates the atmosphere of the male university that did finally open its doors to women towards the end of the nineteenth century—often to make up for declining male enrollments. In 1889, some 80 years after its founding as a male university in Oxford, Ohio, Miami University agreed to institute cooeducation. This description from a recent history of the university may reflect the emotional reality of coeducation then and now, from the male point of view:

> The Reverend W. J. McSurely, a University trustee, pleased with the new president and his faculty, entered his daughter as a special student. The boys soon stopped grumbling: Ella McSurely was just one person and she came and went quietly. But Dr. Hepburn never accepted the change. For a year she attended his class without a sign of recognition. With his colleagues and the trustees Hepburn argued against coeducation, but it was a losing struggle. Soon all Miami classes were open to women, and a traditional integrity was gone from the college.[4]

It is with relief that one turns to the history of the women's colleges—elite and public—that were founded in the 1870's and, for the first time, fully modeled on male institutions. Not only were these colleges often run by women, with a majority or at least a substantial proportion of women faculty, but they saw themselves as working on behalf of women, consciously against the mainstream. Henry Durant, the founder of Wellesley College, delivered a memorable statement in a sermon to students and faculty one Sunday during the college's opening year in 1875. He had just described the "real meaning of the Higher Education of Women" as a "revolt against the slavery in which women are held by the customs of society."

> Wellesley College desires to take the foremost place in the mighty struggle. All our plans are in outspoken opposition to the customs and the prejudices of the public. Therefore, we expect every one of you to be, in the noblest sense, reformers. It is difficult in the midst of great revolutions, whether political or social, to read rightly the signs of the times. You mistake altogether the significance of the movement of which you are a part, if you think this is simply the question of a College education for girls. I believe that God's hand is in it; that it is one of the great ocean currents of Christian civilization; that He is calling to womanhood to come up higher, to prepare herself for great conflicts, for vast reforms in social life, for noblest usefulness. The higher education is but putting on God's armor for the contest.[5]

Durant, the founders of Smith, Bryn Mawr, and Hunter Colleges, and others, insisted that the curriculum offered to undergraduate women be exactly what was offered to men at comparable institutions. As late as 1902, M. Carey Thomas, the president of Bryn Mawr College, argued for the right of women to what she and others called "the men's curriculum."[6] She and others controlling the undergraduate curriculum of women could and did maintain its fidelity to the men's curriculum. Their frustration, as Thomas's lecture makes plain, has to do with the reluctance of male graduate and professional schools to admit their women graduates. Using examples from the work of physicians and bridge builders, Thomas cites the irrelevance of gender to professional excellence and maintains that women and men need the same excellent training if their work is to be valuable.

The history of women's education in the twentieth century is woven in the winning of that battle for the "men's curriculum," though not in the graduate and professional schools as such. The underlying ideology of the "men's curriculum" encouraged women to develop—with the assistance of men—*separate* graduate schools for professions allegedly "appropriate" for women. In addition to the school of education, these included the schools of library science, home economics, social work, and nursing. For more than 60 years, one might claim, that "men's curriculum" succeeded in keeping women in their *educated* place, either as the wives of business and professional men, as tokens in those worlds, or as quiescent members of the women's professions.

What happened to change all that is recent history, although most of our students do not know it if they are young, since they were born into its midst—or a year before Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique,* appeared. This history began to take shape in the late sixties, when Princeton and other faculty wives, who called themselves Women on Words and Images, issued *Dick and Jane as Victims,* a careful study of 134 widely used elementary school readers.[7] At the same time there were the early studies of the status of women on individual campuses or in professional associations. The first flash of awareness about the college curriculum coincided with the lectures by the then-unknown Kate Millet to small audiences in 1968 and 1969, based on the book *Sexual Politics* that was to appear in the summer of 1970. By the following summer, 15 women's studies programs had begun to issue their manifesto-like statements from campuses, the geography of which followed the women's movement: up the west coast from San Diego to the University of Washington in Seattle; down the east coast from New England to Washington, D.C. The ambiance of the documents and the groups that met to write them was, though I did not know it then, strikingly like the tone of Durant's Wellesley sermon. The women's studies program was the vanguard of the women's movement on the campus. In some instances, it was to focus on the research interests of women, on the recovery of women's history and on the restoration of women writers and artists; in other instances, it was to be vastly more ambitious. It was to offer

a new supplementary curriculum to students, and through that curriculum, to transform academe. In the process, it was believed that the university would become more hospitable to women and would supply centers for counseling and child care and medical needs that, indeed, we have seen develop on campuses during this decade.

It was also believed that in this process, the university's sexist curriculum would not only be exposed, but it would be transformed. Faculty would realize the error of their ways, would prove interested in the neglected half of the human race, and within five years—I, too was optimistic in 1970—women's studies itself might not be necessary.

That vision—of women's studies as a strategy for change—is still present, though the *time* we now envision stretches beyond our lifelines, into the next generation's and beyond. In the past eight years the curriculum has mushroomed beyond all early speculation, in part because of the concomitant growth of feminist scholarship Mr. Lauter has described, and in part because of the interests of students and faculty, many of whom come from and bring to the campus the ideas and needs of the women's movement. These serve to maintain a connection between learning and life that is energizing to the education process. Indeed, that energizing connection characteristic of the women's studies curriculum and informing its best scholarship may be the most useful criteria today for a general education curriculum.

In a number of significant ways, women's studies has felt the impact of the women's movement as faculty and students set about to design courses and programs. The primary structural principal is one familiar to all women: you do the work expected of you and then you also do the work you want to do. Faculty and students work in two worlds—that of the traditional department and that of the women's studies program. For both students and faculty, the curriculum does not stop at the classroom door: as "agents of change," they are conscious carriers of feminism to other departments and sectors of the university, as well as to off-campus settings. From the perspective of its participants, the program is a network for change.

Given the nature of women's historical position everywhere in the world, a women's studies curriculum could hardly be elitist. Like the movement it drew from, women's studies has had a white, middle-class, and U.S.-dominated urban bias; but it has also had, from the first, a consciousness about the need to deal with and eliminate that bias. Some courses are deliberately cross-cultural; still others focus on women in regions of the U.S.; on ethnic and racial minorities; on lesbian women; or on the question of class as it relates to women's lives.

TOWARD A GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Of necessity, the program and courses in women's studies are interdisciplinary. They focus on significant problems that need solutions. Few of these questions are simple ones or narrow in implication: How are girls and boys socialized—taught to believe that they have very different abilities and potential? What are the alternatives to the nuclear family, which is fast disappearing from the contemporary scene? What are the implications, for the next generation of workers, of women's integration into the workforce? I have deliberately attempted to write questions that are contemporary in focus. In fact, the women's studies curriculum is notably historical. It generates a rage to understand history.

The components of the women's studies curriculum both complement and supplement one another. Courses on work, on the family, and on the history of educated women all draw on the social sciences, as well as on literary and historical sources. It is not unusual for teachers to use material from fine arts in literature courses, or for sociologists to assign fiction and history reading lists. In a number of ways not possible in the fifties and sixties, therefore, faculty and students—whatever their original traditional disciplines—study and share a body of knowledge and texts that cross disciplines—share, in fact, the critical elements of a genuinely *general education.*

Many of the objectives of general education are reasonably stated in the Rosovsky report and I shall cite them here:

(1) An educated person must be able to think and write clearly and effectively.

(2) An educated person should have a critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain knowledge and understanding of the universe, of society, and of ourselves. Specifically, he or she

should have an informed acquaintance with the aesthetic and intellectual experience of literature and the arts; with history as a mode of understanding present problems and the processes of human affairs; with the concepts and analytic techniques of modern social science; with philosophical analysis, especially as it relates to the moral dilemmas of modern men and women; and with the mathematical and experimental methods of the physical and biological sciences.

(3) An educated person is expected to have some understanding of, and experience in thinking about, moral and ethical problems.[8]

In short, general education is conceived of as preparing students to make informed, ethical judgments that allow them to participate in social, political, and cultural life. Many of us who believe in the responsibility of the university to offer a value-laden curriculum would applaud efforts to implement such goals as Rosovsky names. And yet, as he works out the details of his proposal, the "moral dilemmas" retreat into the background and we hear more often "how great authors" provide us with "timeless and universal aspects of human experience." It is because of that spurious perspective that many students have abandoned the humanities altogether. They are not dummies. Not only the evidence of social science and history, but even their own experience in a world filled with *diverse* claims to truth tells students, for example, that *King Lear* will not, in 1978, merit the label "universal" except in its most banal elements. As exquisite poetry and dramatic rhetoric, its language, characterization, and themes are bound to time and culture. Studied as artifact, it does make sense.

Another significant problem with Rosovsky's proposal is that it is written from the single-minded perspective of the inheritors of Charles Norton Eliot and the Harvard fathers. Radcliffe College, now swallowed by Harvard after 70 years of more-or-less independence, still does not exist for Rosovsky. Nor do students who are members of U.S. minority cultures that Rosovsky describes as "alien." That is the word he used in 1978 to describe native Americans, blacks, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans, as well as all "non-Western" cultures. The report specifies that one course is to be taken on any one of these "alien" cultures.

Aside from its assertions about the need to study truly "major" works or ideas and the concomitant assumption that these are obvious choices—which any educated man could make—there are no central ideas, no connections in the Rosovsky report. The curriculum is finally a grab-bag, the old idea dressed in Harvard's 1978 thrift-shop clothing.

By way of contrast, I offer the following description of a women's studies program instituted at Barnard College less than a year ago. It grows out of more than a decade of scholarship and curricular development by Barnard faculty of great distinction.

Women's Studies is a curriculum

> for students who wish to explore the basic questions raised by the new scholarship on women. Some of the issues touched upon in this field are: sex roles, sex differences, and the concepts of femininity or masculinity; the roles of women in culture and society, past and present, and their implications for the roles of men; questions about the distribution of power, work, and resources in the public and private domains; and the symbolic and religious place of feminine and masculine imagery.[9]

It projects, with few words and with no fashionable rhetoric, ideas that might nourish a general education curriculum. It also illuminates succinctly not only the ways in which a women's studies curriculum focuses on the public and the private worlds, but also the necessary contrasts and conflicts between females and males.

We are not two cultures—despite what C. P. Snow says—but many. Within each, dilemmas of gender have prevailed for centuries. Their histories, explored now by feminists on all continents, do not reveal simple, timeless universals, but complex problems rooted in other questions of culture, caste, class, race, and nationality. The strength of the women's studies curriculum grows from the relationship it projects between the past and the future. Its students and faculty understand themselves as part of a living university responsible for providing future generations with the information and analysis necessary to deal with those "moral dilemmas."

Before this decade is out, we will begin to recognize ourselves more clearly as having lived through the earliest stages of a major revolution in curriculum, brought to consciousness by the new visibility of half the human race. Women of all nations, races, ethnic and religious groups, and

in all conditions of life are fully *half* of the human race. And as all intellectuals know, with or without a curriculum called general education, consciousness is never reversible.

Six weeks after I heard Elizabeth Janeway say on a platform in Missouri that the changes in the status of women are comparable to the rise of the middle class 500 years ago, I heard A. R. Desai, an esteemed Indian sociologist at a conference in India (who had not heard Janeway) predict that India's future rested squarely on its awakening female population. Imagine such ideas coming from the tiny, still barely visible appendages to the great mainstream university. We can hear an echo of the university's official response to the notion of placing women's studies into the mainstream—in an anecdote Jane Marcus tells about her search for a significant literary collection of British women writers. "The Millicant Garrett Fawcett Women's Library," Marcus writes in an introduction to a new collection of essays about Virginia Woolf, "had disappeared without a trace from its old house in Victoria." "It occurred to me that the Keeper [of the Manuscript Room of the British Museum] might know where it had gone, that treasure house of British women's history and literature. Yes, he said, it had gone to a polytechnic in the East End. 'Can you imagine,' he exclaimed, looking me straight in the eye, 'they wanted *us* to take it, those women's papers!' "[10]

FOOTNOTES

[1]Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, *American Higher Education: A Documentary History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), vol. 1, p. 6.
[2]Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 76.
[3]Hofstadter and Smith, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 101 ff.
[4]Walter Havighurst, *The Miami Years: 1809-1969* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1969), p. 152.
[5]Florence Morse Kingsley, *The Life of Henry Fowle Durant: Founder of Wellesley College* (New York: The Century Company, 1924), pp. 238-239.
[6]M. Carey Thomas, "Education for Women and for Men," *The Educated Woman in America*, ed. Barbara M. Cross (New York: Teachers College Press, 1965), p. 152.
[7]*Dick and Jane As Victims: Sex Stereotyping in Children's Readers*, Women on Words and Images, Princeton, N.J., 1972.
[8]"Harvard's Report on the 'Core Curriculum'," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 6, 1978, pp. 15ff.
[9]Hester Eisenstein, "Closeup: Barnard's Women's Studies Program," *Women's Studies Newsletter*, Summer 1978.
[10]Jane Marcus, *Thinking Back Through Our Mothers: Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, to be published in 1979).

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